

Goshen, NY – U.S. Rep. John Hall (D-NY19) announced this week that his office has helped attain over half a million dollars in overdue benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) for veterans in New York's 19th Congressional District. The most recent case Hall was able to help with was that of Mahopac Falls veteran Ed Gettler.

"I am honored to have the opportunity to help Mr. Gettler and all the other deserving veterans in the Hudson Valley with their disability claims," said Hall. "The backlog of cases at the VA can lead to gridlock and way too many veterans unjustifiably having their claims rejected. I'll keep going to bat for veterans to help them obtain the support their service and sacrifice affords them as long as these problems at the VA continue."

Gettler, a U.S. Navy veteran of the Korean War era, will receive monthly payments and additional back pay for the year his case went undecided by the VA. Gettler served in the Navy from 1952 to 1956 and was exposed to ionizing radiation while aboard a ship testing hydrogen bombs near the Marshall Islands. While aboard the USS Curtis, Gettler was on deck and witnessed the test of an atomic explosion. In the years following his service, Gettler suffered many health complications he attributed to this exposure including "atomic skin," hypothyroidism, and heart and ear problems. Gettler was forced to an early retirement and received no benefits from the VA during this time.

"As we head into Memorial Day, Mr. Gettler's case epitomizes the need for us to honor our fallen heroes by giving our current soldiers and veterans the support they have earned," said Congressman Hall.

The current settlement from the VA awards Gettler back pay for post traumatic stress disorder and tinnitus (ringing in the ears). The VA acknowledges Gettler's hearing loss but has yet to award any money for this disability or the hypothyroidism.

Congressman Hall credits Lisa DeMartino, the Veterans Service Representative in his Goshen office, for serving as a committed advocate for veterans. DeMartino worked closely with Gettler throughout his case, and her efforts have helped many other New York veterans with their VA cases. This success marks the milestone of obtaining more than \$501,000 for veterans in the district since Congressman Hall took office in 2007.

Congressman Hall serves on the House Veterans Affairs Committee and as chairman of the Veterans Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs. After more than a year of legislative hearings in Washington, D.C. and the Hudson Valley, as well as a visit the VA's New York Regional Office in March to witness the claims process, Hall wrote and is pushing through Congress legislation to overhaul the disability claims processing system of the VA. The bill would update several key aspects of the VA's outdated disability claims process to reflect today's medical conditions and diagnoses, make progress toward eliminating the backlog, and make it easier for veterans to begin receiving benefits earlier in the review process.

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